



SAN SIMEON EARTHQUAKE AFTER ACTION REPORT



November 2, 2004

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Governor**

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After Action Report

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STATEWIDE AAR
SAN SIMEON EARTHQUAKE

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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In California, as part of the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), statute requires the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) to produce an After Action Report (AAR) within 120 days after each declared disaster. "This report shall review public safety response and disaster recovery activities." The supporting SEMS regulations require jurisdictions "declaring a local emergency for which the governor proclaims a state of emergency, and any state agency responding to that emergency shall complete and transmit an after action report to OES within ninety (90) days of the close of the incident period." The close of the incident period for the San Simeon Earthquake was February 6, 2004. The purpose of this reporting requirement is to capture response efforts, lessons learned, and any recommendations before critical data is lost due to the passage of time.

BACKGROUND

On December 22, 2003 at 1115 hours PST, a 6.5 magnitude earthquake struck the central coast of California in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County. The epicenter of this temblor was located 11 km northeast of San Simeon and 39 km west-northwest of Paso Robles. Significant shaking was recorded as far as Monterey County to the north and Santa Barbara (SB) County to the south. In the southern part of the county, the City of Guadalupe experienced some damage to homes, businesses and infrastructure. The most severe damage occurred in and around the Cities of Paso Robles and Atascadero. Both cities experienced significant damage to public and private buildings and infrastructure, including the destruction of several historic buildings in Paso Robles and serious damage to Atascadero's City Hall.

The shallow, but powerful, earthquake uplifted the Santa Lucia Mountains and triggered a vigorous aftershock sequence. Approximately 800 aftershocks above magnitude 1.8 and 97 above magnitude 3.0 were recorded during the first 48 hours following the initial earthquake. The most powerful aftershock was measured at a magnitude of 4.6. These aftershocks had the potential of causing additional damage to buildings and infrastructure and were a safety concern of residents and emergency personnel working in the affected areas.

STATEWIDE AAR SAN SIMEON EARTHQUAKE

On January 7, 2004, California's Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger requested a federal declaration of a major disaster for both SLO and SB Counties. The Governor's request was based on the following facts:

- Two deaths and 49 reported injuries attributable to the earthquake.
- Preliminary damage assessments in SLO and SB Counties identified an estimated \$67,783,500 in federally eligible "Public Assistance" (PA) damage due to debris removal, emergency protective measures and repairs to public buildings, roads and facilities.
- Federally eligible "Individual Assistance" (IA) was estimated to cost approximately \$2,924,733 for rental assistance, home repairs and other needs assistance. In addition, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) estimated there would be approximately 151 requests for low-interest business and residential loans totaling \$4,688,300.

On January 13, 2004, President Bush declared a major disaster triggering the availability of federal funds to help local communities recover from the earthquake.

It should be noted that during the hotwash following the disaster, a staff member of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) personnel stated "The response to the San Simeon Earthquake by local, county, state, federal and volunteer agencies at all five SEMS response levels was a textbook example of how a large, complex, multi-jurisdiction emergency can be managed in an efficient, effective manner." Both SLO and SB Counties are to be commended on their level of preparedness for responding to this disaster. Everyone involved with responding to this disaster noted that the lines of communication and coordination between local, state and federal governments were handled smoothly. In fact, SLO Operational Area (OA) noted that the initial OA wide situation status assessment was completed much more promptly than had been anticipated based on their previous earthquake emergency planning preparedness efforts.

The earthquake came at a particularly challenging time for OES as we remained immersed in the recovery from the 2003 Southern California Firestorms (DR-1498). In addition, OES was already activated for a Homeland Security Orange Alert due to the increased potential for terrorist activity and many staff were off for the holiday season. According to the Regional Administrator of the Southern Region, the staff really pulled through to provide the impacted OAs with a timely and appropriate level of response and recovery support.

SCOPE OF THE REPORT

The OES prepared this comprehensive statewide AAR on the San Simeon Earthquake using information provided by participating state and local agencies. State agencies and OAs submitted their AARs using a modified Response Information Management System (RIMS) AAR form. Some of the information presented in FEMA's draft report entitled "Emergency Response Activities, San Simeon Earthquake, California, December 22, 2003" was utilized in the preparation of this report. (See Attachment G for additional information included in FEMA's draft report.)

The AAR process allows OES to improve California's operational activities. The comprehensive statewide AAR identifies specific improvements that may be included in subsequent plans and procedures within OES and the impacted OAs. An OA is defined as a county and all the political subdivisions within the county. The OA is responsible for coordination between the state's (OES) emergency operations centers and the political subdivisions, including the cities, towns and special districts located within the county.

Recommendations

Below are the final findings and recommendations divided into four broad categories:

1. Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS): Most local governments and state agencies indicated that SEMS functioned well and helped them mount an effective response. Several agencies made specific recommendations to improve SEMS including: (1) conducting SEMS training on a continuous basis to ensure all potential responders have the appropriate training; (2) providing additional supplies and/or space in the State Operations Center (SOC), the Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC) and the Disaster Field Office (DFO) to perform assigned duties; and (3) developing and implementing the Geographic Information System (GIS) and Hazards US (HAZUS) procedures and protocols that ensure local governments receive HAZUS damage estimates on a timely basis and that GIS data standards are established.
2. Mutual Aid: One state agency indicated that if the OAs would use the Multiple Agency Incident Resource Processing System (MIRPS), it would facilitate resource management by centralizing the ordering of Mutual Aid resources.
3. Hazard Mitigation: Three state agencies indicated several areas for improving California's ability to respond after an earthquake and withstand damage caused by an earthquake including: (1) improving building/construction codes, (2) requiring cell phone companies to comply with California's Building Standards code, (3) updating building codes for public school construction, and (4) installing back-up power sources for all emergency warning systems.
4. Public Information: One state agency recommended developing information on earthquake and building safety for public dissemination to educate Californians on how to live safely with earthquakes.